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UNCLAS MAPUTO 000099

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/S

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SUBJECT: Mocumbi - His days are numbered, it would seem

1. (SBU) Summary: At a Press conference held in Maputo January 20, Prime Minister Pascoal Mocumbi indicated that he will accept a position as the High Level Representative of a European Union Health Initiative. While he did not state when he would be leaving his current position, it appears that it could be as early as February/March. End summary

2. (U) At the invite of the European Union, the Ambassador attended a January 20 press conference which featured Prime Minister Mocumbi. Purpose of the encounter with the Press was to provide the media with information on the "European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership - EDCTP" an initiative in which Prime Minister Mocumbi has been invited to serve as the High Level Representative.

3. (U) The initiative was featured as a bold undertaking, a long term partnership between Europe and developing countries to develop new medicines and vaccines to address the three largest health threats to development: HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. Fifteen European countries are participating in the coordinating committee. The EU plans to provide 200 million Euros in support for the project. The EDCTP will seek to coordinate research efforts and information flow among the various African and European scientific communities. The initiative also envisions paying stipends to encourage African researchers and scientists who have departed Africa to return. While still in its earliest stages, the EDCTP will set up two secretariats: one in the Netherlands, the other in Africa.

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4. (SBU) Avoiding responding directly to questions concerning his future role in the initiative, Mocumbi's comments focused on the importance of the program and its potential for Africa and for Mozambique. He side-stepped questions from the press regarding whether he would be leaving his position as prime minister soon, by saying that the timing of his participation in the project is still unclear as the initiative is in its early stages. His role is first to serve a Prime Minister of Mozambique, he said, and the decision is not his to make, but President Chissano's.

5. (SBU) Comment: This press conference appears to set the stage for an imminent departure by Mocumbi. Maputo is rife with rumors regarding who will succeed him. We have heard that Finance Minister Louisa Diogo is the top candidate. It is widely held that Diogo would only hold the job until a new cabinet would be formed following the expected election victory of Armando Guebuza. Guebuza is expected to select a close ally to serve as PM, possible former Information Minister Teodato Hinguane. Rumors have circulated in the past months regarding Mocumbi's imminent departure for Europe, and he put them off. The Dutch Ambassador thought Mocumbi would be leaving sooner rather than later. She mentioned that the EDCTP hopes to have its secretariat launched in February. If that is so, and if

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Mocumbi's role is a critical one, it would seem that he would have to be free to assume his new duties soon. What is missing in all of this is a statement from the Presidency concerning Mocumbi and his successor. Mocumbi, for his part, put off answering a question regarding how he would enjoy living in Holland by saying he would prefer to defer comment until he has had the opportunity to live there a while and to experience the climate.

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